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Mineral Industry Surveys

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U.S. PRODUCTION OF SELECTED MINERAL COMMODITIES IN THE FOURTH QUARTER 2012

U.S. mine and plant production data for selected mineral commodities are provided monthly (or quarterly) by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to the Board of Governors, Federal Reserve System (FRS), for use in preparing its index of industrial production and the related capacity indexes and capacity utilization rates. These measures cover manufacturing, mining, and electric and gas utilities, and they are among the key economic indicators monitored by the FRS for guidance in determining national monetary policy. The data in this report include current and prior months' data provided to the FRS, some of which have been revised.

Decreases in domestic production of construction materials (cement, construction sand and gravel, and crushed stone), as well as gypsum, were large compared with production during the third quarter of 2012, (table 1) likely owing to a seasonal decline in construction compared with previous quarters of 2012. The U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (2013) reported privately owned housing unit starts increased 33% in the fourth quarter of 2012 compared with that of the same period in 2011, and increased by approximately 15% in the fourth quarter of 2012 compared with that of the third quarter of 2012. The U.S Census Bureau (2013) also reported that the seasonally adjusted value of construction in 2012 was 9.2% above that in 2011.

Copper production in the United States increased from the third quarter to the fourth quarter; increases in Arizona, New Mexico, and Nevada were partially offset by lower production in Utah. Molybdenum production in the United States decreased by 12% in 2012 from that in 2011 primarily owing to reduced production from the Thompson Creek Mine in Idaho. The 7% increase of phosphate rock production from 2011 to 2012 was the result of strong demand during the agricultural growing season earlier in the year. Although zinc production was also lower during the first three quarters of 2012, mainly owing to reduced milling rates and lower zinc ore grades at the Red Dog Mine in Alaska and the temporary closure of the Lucky Friday Mine in Idaho, production increased in the fourth quarter 2012 compared with the fourth quarter of 2011 and the third quarter of 2012. Closure of the Lucky Friday Mine also was responsible for lower silver production; silver production increased in the fourth quarter of 2012 compared with that of the third quarter.

References Cited

U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, New residential construction in April 2013: Washington, DC, U.S. Department of Commerce, May 16, 10 p. (Accessed May 24, 2013, at http://www.census.gov/construction/nrc/)

U.S. Census Bureau, 2013, December 2012 construction at $855.0 billion Annual Rate: Washington DC, U.S. Department of Commerce, February 1, 5 p. (accessed May 24, 2013 at http://www.census.gov/construction/c30/prpdf.html)

TABLE 1
PRODUCTION TRENDS FOR SELECTED MINERAL COMMODITIES

Mineral commodity	Percentage change, 4th quarter 2012 vs. 3d quarter 2012[1]	Percentage change, 2012 total vs. 2011 total[1]
Aluminum (secondary)	1	-4
Cement	-14	9
Copper	11	5
Gold	-3	-3
Gypsum	-27	(2)
Iron ore	8	-3
Lead	-1	1
Molybdenum	2	-12
Phosphate rock	-10	7
Sand and gravel, construction	-23	(2)
Silver	4	-9
Soda ash	3	4
Stone, crushed	-16	-1
Zinc	8	-4

[1]Percentage change based on unrounded data.
[2]Less than 0.5%.

TABLE 2

U.S. PRODUCTION OF SELECTED MINERAL COMMODITIES, BY QUARTER[1, 2]

Mineral commodity		2011				2012				1st quarter–4th quarter	
		1st quarter	2d quarter	3d quarter	4th quarter	1st quarter	2d quarter	3d quarter	4th quarter	2011	2012
Aluminum[3]	thousand metric tons	196 r	216 r	221 r	220 r	210 r	213 r	197 r	199 e	853 r	818 e
Cement[4]	million metric tons	11.8	17.9	20.1	16.9	14.2	20.1	20.5	17.7 e	66.6	72.5 e
Copper[5]	thousand metric tons	265	275	277	297	277 r	277 r	290 r	323	1,110	1,170
Gold[5]	metric tons	57.2	59.3	59.0	58.4	56.5	56.7	57.6 r	56.1	234	227
Gypsum[6]	million metric tons	3.1	2.9	3.0	2.9	3.0	3.1	3.4	2.5 e	11.9	11.9 e
Iron ore[7]	do.	12.4	13.7	13.9	13.7	12.7	12.6	12.9	14.0 e	53.6	52.3 e
Lead[5]	thousand metric tons	81.7	84.6	82.6	84.7	83.6	83.0	84.7 r	84.2	334	336
Molybdenum[5]	do.	16.6	18.4	14.8	12.9	15.0	13.9	13.5 r	13.7	63.7 [8]	56.1
Phosphate rock[9]	million metric tons	7.0	6.8	7.4	6.9	6.5	7.9	8.3	7.4 e	28.1	30.1 e
Sand and gravel, construction[10]	do.	125 r	215 r	262 r	200 r	137 r	231 r	246 r	189 e	802	802 e
Silver[5]	metric tons	286	287	271	278	247	254 r	257 r	268	1,120	1,030
Soda ash[7]	million metric tons	2.6	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.7	2.6	2.8 r	2.9	10.7	11.1
Stone, crushed[10]	do.	200 r	312	350 r	282	217	317 r	334 r	282 e	1,160 r, [8]	1,150 e
Zinc[5]	thousand metric tons	186	184	194	180	174	175	176 r	189	743	714

[e]Estimated. [r]Revised. do. Ditto.

[1]Based on data available as of February 13, 2013.

[2]Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

[3]Aluminum alloys produced at secondary smelters in the United States, less primary aluminum consumed, primary silicon consumed, and other alloying ingredients consumed.

[4]Data are shipments of domestically produced portland and blended cement, including cement made from imported clinker, as a proxy for actual domestic cement production.

[5]Recoverable mine production.

[6]Calcined production.

[7]Mine production.

[8]Total does not equal sum of year's quarterly data owing to adjustments to annual data that are not broken out by quarter.

[9]Marketable mine production.

[10]Sold or used; quarterly survey based on sample survey.